

Residents may pay to finish pipeline

By Andy Bourelle
Tribune Staff Writer

A deal may soon be made between the South Tahoe Public Utility District and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency about funding the district's recycled water export pipeline. However, with the plan the pipeline project's completion date will be pushed back four years and customers' sewer rates may be raised 3.5 percent a year for six years.

"I don't want anyone to misunderstand this as a happy day," said STPUD board member Chris Strohm at the utility district's meeting Thursday. "We're talking about six years of rate increases, and we're talking about a decelerated rate for finishing the pipeline ... it's a result of this EPA pressure."

The board took no action but directed STPUD staff to re-apply for the several million dollar grant which EPA owes the district.

"Eventually, we'll come back to the board with the grant offer and that will be the contract," said Bob Baer, STPUD general manager. "We'll have to carefully look at the terms before we sign it."

STPUD has spent the past few years working to replace its recycled water export pipeline, which

Future water bills

Percent change	Year	charge	Annual Change
3.5	98/99	\$263.77	\$8.89
3.5	99/00	\$273.00	\$9.23
3.5	00/01	\$282.60	\$9.60
3.5	01/02	\$292.50	\$9.90
3.5	02/03	\$302.69	\$10.19
3.5	03/04	\$313.34	\$10.65

Based on current annual average of \$254.88

carries 1.7 billion gallons of recycled water 26 miles to Alpine County each year, where it irrigates more than 2,000 acres of ranch land. Originally built in the 1960s, under mandate to pump wastewater out of the basin, the pipeline had experienced breaks and spills.

Stemming from the 1997 Presidential Summit at Lake Tahoe, \$7.15 million was appropriated by Congress in 1997 to go to STPUD to help pay for the construction of the new pipeline the district had already spent millions of dollars on. Because of the promise of the funds, STPUD borrowed \$5 million to complete its 1998 phase of the project.

Also this year, Congress appropriated another \$2.5 million for the project; however, EPA and STPUD have been in disagreement about the money.

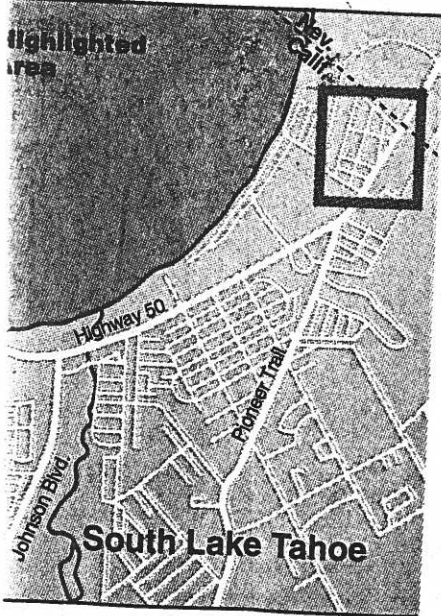
STPUD and the congressional supporters of the grant have said that the money the district

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ak ground in May 2000.

Project 3

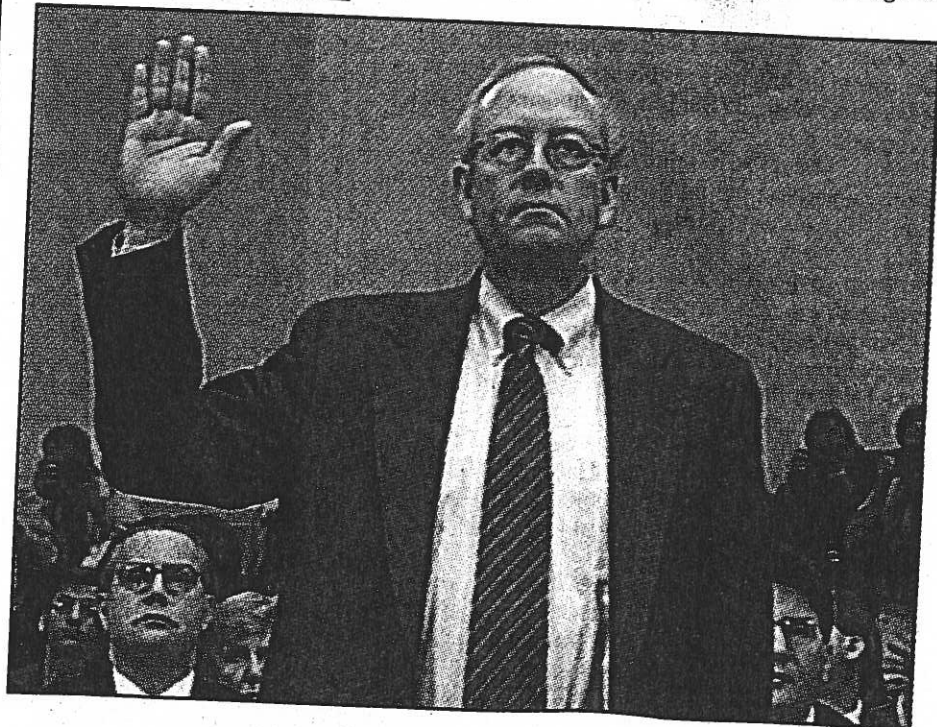


Tahoe Tribune Graphic

r, when complete, will include a n with 30-foot-high ceilings. ion center could attract bigger musical o the area, as well as serve as a room- oulder seasons and weekdays. vents," Scharer said. "It puts us in a

s historically got about 80 percent of ng tables and slot machines, the split ns such as food and entertainment. convention center idea. Not only is it it will help the motels (remaining a," Scharer said.

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Independent Council Kenneth C.

AP Laser Photo



Dan Thrift/Tahoe Tribune

Blowing his way to victory, Skyler Murray, 6, sends his sailboat down the course in the Meyers Cub Scouts rain gutter regatta at Meyers Elementary School on Wednesday evening.

Pipeline

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has spent — to date, more than \$20 million — should be counted as the district's 45-percent financial match. EPA had indicated that is a significant deviation from its standard procedure.

The two agencies have not reached an agreement, and STPUD earlier this month canceled the 1999 phase of pipeline project. The district intended the project be completed in 2000. With the proposed agreement, STPUD expects it to be completed in 2004.

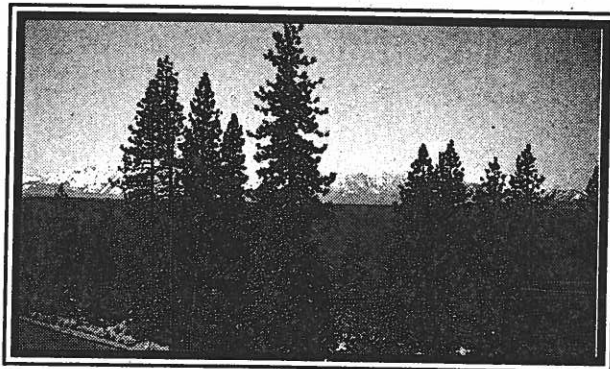
Duane Wallace, STPUD board member and part of the district's finance committee, said officials came up with the agreement based on three requirements: Finishing the project as quickly as possible, to keep rates as low as possible and to leave the district in good financial standing after the project was finished.

"We're trying to do the right thing," Wallace said.

Board members expressed reservations about the situation but said it was the best solution.

"It's not a happy day, but it's something that has to be done," said Mary Lou Mosbacher, STPUD board member.

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The Northern Sierra Council Association is very grateful to rah's Lake Tahoe for hosting annual Winter Activities Symposium on Nov. 10. The Harrah's restaurant portions were exquisitely set up; food was so delicious. The special carvings of our association

